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Filed : February 6, 2002

1991); M.P.E.P. § 706.02(j). "To support the conclusion that the claimed invention is directed to obvious subject matter, either the references must expressly or impliedly suggest the claimed invention or the examiner must present a convincing line of reasoning as to why the artisan would have found the claimed invention to have been obvious in light of the teachings of the references." *Ex parte Clapp*, 227 U.S.P.Q. 972, 973 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1985); M.P.E.P. § 706.02(j).

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-26 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Howard (U.S. Patent No. 5,390,695) in view of Kownacki (U.S. Patent No. 5,988,207). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. The Examiner has also rejected Claim 27 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Howard, in view of Kownacki, and further in view of Weatherill (U.S. Patent No. D419961).

In order to facilitate prosecution, Applicants have amended all Claims to recite that an aperture is "located within said facial indicia." Applicants submit that these amendments are fully supported by the application as filed. *See e.g.*, Specification, Figure 3.

The Examiner has previously stated with regard to Claim 26 (reciting that "the aperture is within the facial indicia element") that "the design of the facial indicia and that the aperture is within the indicia would have been obvious matters of ornamental design choice to a person having ordinary skill in the art based on factors such as *ornamental preference* and *design criteria*." Office Action at p.2 (*emphasis added*). Applicants disagree. Applicants respectfully submit that *none* of the cited references teach an aperture located within or as a part any facial indicia. As a result, the Examiner has not provided teachings which teach or suggest all the claim limitations of amended Claims 1, 14, 21, and 25. *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488; M.P.E.P. § 706.02(j). Broad, conclusory statements about "ornamental preference and design criteria" do not supply this missing element. Office Action at p. 2. The Examiner assertion does not present a *prima facie* case with regard to the claims, as amended. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections have been traversed by amendment.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, Applicants submit that the application is in condition for allowance and respectfully request the same. If, however, some issue remains

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that the Examiner feels can be addressed by Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is cordially invited to call the undersigned for authorization.

Attached hereto is a separate paper entitled VERSION OF THE AMENDMENTS SHOWING CHANGES MADE, in which additions are shown in double underlining and deletions are shown ~~stricken through~~.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION SHOWING CHANGES MADE IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1, 14, 21 and 25 have been amended.

Claim 26 has been canceled.

1. (Amended) A reel housing configured to enclose a rotatable reel drum, said housing having an access panel having an exterior surface, said access panel having a closed position in which said access panel does not permit a human hand to access an interior of said housing, and an open position in which said access panel permits a human hand to access said interior of said housing, said exterior surface of said access panel having facial indicia to resemble one of an animal, a human, a human-like character, and an alien creature, said housing having an aperture sized to closely surround spoolable linear material extending through said aperture, so that the linear material can be spooled onto and unspooled from the reel drum while said housing encloses the reel drum, wherein said aperture is located within said facial indicia.

2. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said access panel is removable from the remainder of said housing.

3. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said access panel is hingedly attached to the remainder of said housing.

4. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said facial indicia includes one or more of (i) a pair of eyes, (ii) a nose or beak, and (iii) a mouth.

5. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said facial indicia are three dimensional in form.

6. The reel housing of Claim 5, said facial indicia comprising elements protruding outward from said access panel.

7. The reel housing of Claim 5, said facial indicia comprising indentations in said exterior surface of said access panel.

8. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said housing encloses a rotatable reel drum.

9. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said facial indicia resemble the appearance of an insect's face.

10. The reel housing of Claim 9, wherein said facial indicia resemble the appearance of a ladybug's face.

11. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said facial indicia resemble the appearance of an aquatic animal's face.

12. The reel housing of Claim 11, wherein said facial indicia resemble the appearance of a frog's face.

13. The reel housing of Claim 11, wherein said facial indicia resemble the appearance of a duck's face.

14. (Amended) A reel housing comprising a housing body configured to enclose a rotatable reel drum as linear material is spooled onto or unspooled from the drum, said housing body having an aperture through which hose is spooled or unspooled and a removable access panel having an exterior surface, wherein removal of said access panel allows access to an interior of said housing body, said exterior surface of said access panel being decorated with three dimensional facial indicia including one or more of (i) a pair of eyes, (ii) a nose or beak, and (iii) a mouth, wherein said aperture is located within said facial indicia.

15. The reel housing of Claim 14, said facial indicia comprising elements protruding outward from said access panel.

16. The reel housing of Claim 14 said facial indicia comprising indentations in said exterior surface of said access panel.

17. The reel housing of Claim 14, said facial indicia resembling the face of a character.

18. The reel housing of Claim 14, said facial indicia resembling the face of an animal.

19. The reel housing of Claim 18, wherein said facial indicia resemble one of a ladybug's face, a frog's face, and a duck's face.

20. The reel housing of Claim 14, wherein said housing body encloses a rotatable reel drum.

21. (Amended) A reel housing configured to enclose a rotatable reel drum, said housing comprising a housing body and a facial indicia element configured to be selectively attached and detached from said housing body, said facial indicia element having an exterior surface decorated with facial indicia to resemble one of an animal, a human, a human-like character, and an alien creature, the housing having an aperture sized to closely receive spoolable linear material extending through said aperture, wherein said aperture is located within said facial indicia.

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22. The reel housing of Claim 21, wherein the aperture is within said facial indicia element.

23. The reel housing of Claim 21, wherein the facial indicia element comprises an access panel having an open position in which said access panel permits a human hand to access said reel drum, and a closed position in which said access panel prevents a human hand from accessing said reel drum.

24. The reel housing of Claim 1, wherein said aperture is in said access panel.

25. (Amended) A reel comprising a rotatable reel drum and a housing enclosing the reel drum, wherein the housing comprises a housing body and a facial indicia element configured to be selectively attached and detached from the housing body, the housing having an aperture sized to closely receive spoolable linear material extending through the aperture, the facial indicia element having an exterior surface decorated with facial indicia to resemble one of an animal, a human, a human-like character, and an alien creature, wherein said aperture is located within said facial indicia.

27. The reel of Claim 25, wherein the housing is generally spherical.

28. The reel of Claim 25, wherein the facial indicia element comprises an access panel having an open position in which said access panel permits a human hand to access said reel drum, and a closed position in which said access panel prevents a human hand from accessing said reel drum.